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PROPOSAL

I have recently been fascinated with the idea of the heroine, as a positive role model for myself and for women in general. To date I have drawn mainly from personal and autobiographical sources. This forms the broad basis for the subject matter, themes and general enquiry of my work.

Further exploration of the area of positive role models has led to an investigation of the power relationships and heirarchies which serve in many ways to prevent women in general from forming more positive outlooks toward the dilemmas of female role and identity. My investigation of these dilemmas has taken the form of a personal symbolism and I wish to continue working with these ideas. The form that they take may however, be open to a degree of change over the duration of the course.

To date the majority of my work has been with in the area of printmaking and I intend at present to continue working within this area in the hope of improving my technical knowledge.

FIRST PAPER

"HEROINES, ROLE MODELS AND EXEMPLARY WOMEN IN RELATION TO CONTEMPORARY THOUGHT."

- Positioning the Heroine Within the Representations of Femininity - a background.

- Exemplary Historical Figureheads - the privilege of being visable.

- The Feminine Heroine and Gender Construction.

- Heroine and Patriarchal Privilege.

- Contrasting the Portrayal of a Feminist Heroine with the Portrayal of a Traditional Heroine.

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The idea of the heroine implicitly supports a celebratory view of women. It is often said that women need heroines and (as the jargon of behaviourist psychology would have it) 'role models' - strong women to convince the rest of us that women, despite all odds can be brave, be brilliant, excel. Yet those characteristics and examples re-create the outstanding, the achiever, the artist . . . " The whole concept of feminist heroines carries with it an implication of identity over difference and of exceptional women, of rampant individualism."(1)

Heroines, affirmative role models and exemplary women are of particular interest in that they are central to problems of female representation both by and for women in traditional narratives and history.

In developing an interest in the creation of these role models I wish to explore the extent to which they may or may not be relevant within current feminist debate. This involves an exploration of the continuities and discontinuities that preoccupy the theory of the women's movement over the last fifteen years.

It speaks specifically of Western feminist thought in developed industrialised nations such as Australia, the United States and Britain. The concern with these ideas is as they relate to the visual arts, film and literature:

"These are central objects of feminist analysis of women's subordination for it was in these practices together with the critical consensus that supported them and

constructed their canons, that the languages and images through which subordinate female identities were naturalised, could be identified."(2)

It involves some recent developments in feminist social and political theory, both radical and socialist. Also it includes developments in feminist deconstruction of psychoanalytic and philosophical texts, particularly Lacanian psychoanalysis which helps to understand social constructions of femininity and sexuality.

The word HEROINE is used here in two contexts. The first involves the use of a heroine as a developed female character by which certain characteristics and representations of women are conveyed to a viewer or reader in a book or film. These are both prescriptive and descriptive for women. The second is that of an exemplary figure surviving history, being exceptional in the sense of having survived anonymity. Perhaps by some daringly innovative achievement or by successfully competing in a 'man's world'. These successes or triumphs often threaten patriarchal values.

A heroine, although not always heroic in the idealised historical sense, is used as a vehicle whereby meanings of femininity can be conveyed and constructed. A heroine's behaviour can be used to educate or influence a woman into believing that certain actions and roles are 'normal' or 'natural'. Behaviour patterns involving dominance and submission or strategies which conceal power or cunning are reinforced.

The construction of female sexuality as an 'available'

commodity and the objectification of the female body may be reinforced within these attitudes toward femininity. E. Ann Kaplan says in Women and Film - Both Sides of the Camera that our society is deeply committed to myths of sexual difference called 'masculine' and 'feminine'. Heroes and heroines, whether stereotyped or not, act as vehicles for the consumption of those myths.

POSITIONING THE HEROINE WITHIN THE REPRESENTATIONS OF FEMININITY - A BACKGROUND.

An important development for feminist thought is a more critical awareness and more theoretical position than has previously been the case. The search for a feminine sensibility dominated feminist thought during the 1960's and 1970's, highlighting the promotion of women-centred values. It focused upon the inclusion of women in chronologies and conferences, unfortunately resulting in tokenism and unthreatening representation. 'Consciousness-raising' enabled major achievements during the first wave of feminism:

This highlights an awareness that women's experience has never been adequately explained by women themselves, in Western culture. It remains peripheral, described mainly not by women but by men. Women were invited to talk about their feelings in a confessional manner. Later.

"Feminism sought, therefore, simultaneously to speak of women's immediate experience and to formulate a political agenda - more a political vision - for women; theory was then drawn in to act as the hinge between experience and politics."(3)

Changes within art practice implied a break with traditional approaches to art as personal, individual experience lived outside and above society. It reflected feminism's theoretical inability to settle for humanist definitions of the subject for two reasons. The first involved breaks with

traditional bourgeois notions of the male artist as supreme creative genius and classless man for which there can be no female equivalent. The second moved away from female 'essentialist' positions within art, involving the celebration of the inherent qualities of so-called 'women's work'.

Feminism during the 1970's was characterised by a 'false universalism', which believed that one woman's experience was every woman's experience because:

"All women have a bond which is eternal, biological and historical . . . with a limitless energy that patriarchs of all classes, nations and eras of history try to dominate and control."(4)

Sandy Flitterman and Judith Barry claim that female artists must avoid claiming a:

"... specific female artistic presence which could find expression if allowed to be explored more freely as this sort of art is dangerous in not taking into account the social contradictions involved in femininity."(5)

What is most interesting here is this aspect of the movement, away from a celebration of the 'essentialist' position of women in areas that they were 'allowed', inherent (and necessary to), earlier developments within radical feminist theory. It concerns the contradictory representations of femininity conveyed in the meanings of 'woman-centred' values by role models, heroines and exemplary women. I suggest that the idea of the heroine or exemplary figurehead, inspiring achievement and greatness is a concept which relates broadly to earlier debates within feminist theory. While it is

important to pay tribute to the achievement of many women who heroically struggled against a lack of recognition, the theme has been discontinued as a feminist strategy. This is the result of self-examination, involving a critical and theoretical awareness of psychoanalysis and language structures, characterising second-wave feminist theory.

The new concerns centre mainly upon the ways images are organised and the problems of 'woman-as-sign'. This makes the issue of self-definition most important for feminism. Too frequently traditional heroines in narratives such as melodramas, thrillers, detective stories, romances etc., represent "... the impossibility of change for women within the structures of the bourgeois narrative."(6)

Any exploration of women's experience and role reveals that of the 'victim' of patriarchal values. To validate 'women's experience' it is reasonable to expect some recovery of women's lives in the light of women who transcend the role of victim.

However, by examining the way in which traditional heroines are constructed, together with the contradictory image that they represent, it is easier to understnd how their heroics and their femininity leave male value systems intact. The traditional heroine rarely controls her own destiny and may, as in classical narratives such as La Boheme, be sacrificed so that the lover/hero may continue to live as he pleases. Traditional heroines remain objects of romantic love, and are usually constructed in a manner which privileges the male viewpoint. They are the product of male imaginations.

However, acceptable levels of social content have shifted in the 1980's and women's role is no longer solely confined to that of the passive. More active roles are portrayable, especially if combined with acceptable models of femininity centring upon domesticity, marriage and children. Feminist issues of the 1970's have been popularised enough to appear in a diluted form within traditional characterisations.

EXEMPLARY HISTORICAL FIGUREHEADS - THE PRIVILEGE OF BEING VISIBLE.

Feminist investigation into history of both right and left political persuasions tries to uncover women, their lives and experiences, as subjects of knowledge. The survival of female achievement may be the basis for many women appearing exceptional. They remain as exceptions to the rule, promoted by an emphasis upon biographies objectifying their achievement. Perhaps one of the reasons that the recovery of women in history has been in this exceptional biographical light is that:

". . . even with the best intentions, investigation of subjects taken to be historically important will yield little information about women, if only because exclusion from activities like politics, diplomacy, war and economic enterprise has marked women's historical experience in Western culture. . ."(7)

Those women, who for whatever reasons, are within these areas of study are more likely to be considered worthy of attention.

"Published history is dominated by political, diplomatic and military history through the study of great men and great ideas. . . In general it contains more of the desires, opinions and activities of the powerful."(8)

There is, therefore, more known about royal mistresses and the wives of famous male historical figures. However, the

importance of these women can be ignored or trivialised when history concerns itself with:

". . . larger matters of public concern . . . serving to promote masculinism and thereby distorting their experiences and agency."(9)

For example, E.H. Carr's disparaging views on the role of personal relations in history when citing Antony and Cleopatra's relationship and the Battle of Actium:

"It is unnecessarily discourteous to Cleopatra's beauty to suggest that Antony's infatuation had no cause. The connection between female beauty and male infatuation is one of the most regular sequences of cause and effect, interrupting so to speak, clashing with the sequence with which the historian is primarily concerned to investigate."(10)

The exploration of women artists in history is a major area where the recovery of individual female artists' lives and work is well documented. It demonstrates many preoccupations of both first and second wave feminist thought and challenges some of the methodology mainstream historians use for choosing evidence or subjects for study.

Two major lines of inquiry into women artists in history appear in the questions - "Why have there been no great women artists?"(11) and "why is so little known about great women artists?"(12) These two questions formed the backbone of earlier investigations into women's art history during the 1970's.

"The first offers a social and historical explanation for the peripheral place of women artists in traditional culture.

The second sees women artists as victims of social and educational roles, ie., that in their own sphere of influence they were great but in terms of traditional great art the terms have been withheld."(13)

Both questions have merit and formed the larger part of the recovery of women artists in art history from the Renaissance onwards by feminist art historians.

However, the substitution of the 'great man' theory for the 'great woman' theory challenges nothing. It is more important to attack the nature of historiography itself. Questioning the methods of acquiring or ignoring knowledge and evidence, introducing:

". . . women as distinct subjects not included within the existing terms and varieties of historical writing in an attempt to establish that patriarchal relations are not 'natural' and inevitable but contingent and changing."(14)

The emphasis placed upon the recovery of individual women artists during the 1970's was exemplified by a piece of work called "The Dinner Party", by American artist Judy Chicago. It involves the names of female historical figures who, Chicago felt, had made valid contributions to the history of women and whose achievements provided inspiration for other women. It has been called 'a gallery of ancestors'. Individual women were recalled as exemplary figures who, despite great odds, inspired a sense of pride and dignity for other women.

This piece also typifies some early feminist art

pre-occupations, both conceptually and in its execution. It attempted to recover individual achievement from the neglect or trivialisation of traditional mainstream history. This achievement was generally atypical of women's lives and the piece was characterised by an attempt to link or unite all women throughout history.

Internal debate and analysis of this type of universality which contains a transhistorical, classless bonding between women and a collective realisation of oppression ,is questioned particularly by socialist feminists. Their problem with this approach to "womens experience is its search for a transhistorical, uniting heritage that pays very little attention to the social construction of women and femininity within the historical period in which they lived."(15)

"It eludes the fact that they had assumptions and projects very different from our own"(16), and ignores the question of class within representations of femininity.

THE FEMININE HEROINE AND GENDER CONSTRUCTION:

A major problem with exemplary women or heroines is that they draw on a set of masculine criteria for their validity. Usually they are women who have had considerable success within male dominated areas. They acquire male gender characteristics such as strength,initiative, aggression and courage in order to survive by aquiring male values and by performing acts from which women are traditionally excluded. By performing in a manner valuable to men they transcend the restrictions of their sex and its position in society.

The reverse situation, of men acquiring stereotyped female gender characteristics is rarely ,if ever, true. In fact, as Kay Bussey shows in the 'First Socialisation' related studies show that boys at an early age actively avoid doing the things which females do. Clare Burton in an article on equal opportunity programmes shows how much better men get at avoiding female skills, in general, as they get older. There seems to be little value for men in acquiring female stereotyped gender characteristics.

The construction of femininity and gender roles is most important to the investigation of exemplary role models and heroines. Radical and Marxist feminist perspectives deal with feminism as a social construct which takes particular forms in Western culture. It is reinforced most effectively through media representation.

Feminist film theory, semiotics and Lacanian

psychoanalysis help to challenge the consumption of female identity. It is in the interests of feminism that:

"Stereotypes, sex and gender roles should be deconstructed in an attempt to understand the subordination of women's activities to men's activities throughout history".(17)

Another question is to find out how it can survive in western, educated countries where emphasis is placed upon the individual. E. Ann Kaplan states in Women and Film that ". . . the first step is raising questions which challenge the patriarchal positioning of women as marginal and silent."(18)

"It must be stated, however that each form of oppression has its own trajectory and at times may change at a faster or slower pace than at others. It is important to recognise difference and historical unevenness."(19)

One form of universalisation should not be replaced by another. This realisation highlights a major shift in feminist thought from the first to the second wave.

Feminist analysis of gender construction has theoretically undermined earlier scientific notions of biologically inherited characteristics for women and the nature of femininity. Our society conveys to the male the role of public individual, producer and creator. The woman's role remains that of a private, nurturing creature. The analysis of gender and whose interests it serves is continually being re-appraised within political, social and cultural theory. It develops, however, with quite different political emphasis amongst different classes in different historical situations.

As Sheila Rowbottom says, changes in historical context can alter social meanings and ideas about women's role, regardless of the ground chosen on which to define it. For example, she uses a theme current with 'Utopian Socialists' of the nineteenth century. That of the 'woman messiah', redeeming humanity with intensely female qualities of gentleness, harmony and co-operation - qualities supposedly dormant in men. This is charateristic of the 'Angel of the Hearth' mentality which served to consolidate rather than transform that particular bourgeois world.

The idea of biologically inherited characteristics and therefore, natural and unchanging characteristics is used as a weapon (psychological) to keep women in their 'place'. This place remains socially marginal, peripheral and undervalued. Women who step outside traditional roles or other prescribed definitions of the 'feminine' may be socially punished by being regarded as deviant, abnormal, bad or mentally ill.

"Gender development in boys is characterised by the desire to be like other boys and by a total rejection of female behaviour. Society offers greater incentives such as power and status to the male role. Therefore, women may enhance their position by engaging in male behaviour."(20)

The association of gender and sex role stereotypes is central to the construction of a heroine in a narrative or fictional sense. It relates to the construction of desirable forms of femininity as 'model' forms of behaviour. It prescribes the way in which a woman should dress, act, speak,

feel and think in a 'given' situation. This can vary from a T.V. or filmic soapie such as 'Dallas' or 'Days of Our Lives' to the classical narrative traditions of 'high' literature. Women are depicted in roles which are traditionally assigned to them. That is the beautiful or distressed damsel, the awesome mother, the frightening monster or witch. The role of the heroine, Gretchen, in Goethe's Faust is interesting, for despite the fact that Faust's actions are often futile and destructive, they remain visionary, dynamic, or active. By contrast, the heroine Gretchen is depicted as being dutiful and domestic, pale and sterile. Goethe symbolises within a humanist tradition, the polarity of being and doing and the patriarchal myth of the striving, creative artist as hero. When these roles and polarities are regularly repeated and stressed within cultural traditions, they become a "reinforcement which takes on the factual."(21)

HEROINE AND PATRIARCHAL PRIVILEGE:

Feminist investigation into traditional literary or filmic representations of women have highlighted the issue of patriarchal privelege, reinforcing what men require of women. Men control women through definitions of self-hood and pleasure as well as through coercion, as they are the imaginary representations of men.

The issue is how far simple forms of identification may make the reader/viewer align herself with the heroine. This involves elements of self-projection into the fantasies. Much depends upon the naivete of the reader, but from the nineteenth century onwards theorists of reading, in particular, have assumed a "fairly direct relationship between the uneducated, the working class person - and woman."(22)

How far providing surrogate experiences and models for women will invite a direct identification is an open question.

CONTRASTING THE PORTRAYAL OF A FEMINIST HEROINE WITH THE PORTRAYAL OF A TRADITIONAL HEROINE:

Previously in dealing with the 'heroine' the point was raised that as a heroine a woman often draws on a set of masculine criteria for her validity. Another problem is the way in which her achievement or successful entry into a 'man's world' may be trivialised or distorted. There should be some credit given to what historically was a daring innovation for women. For example, a woman studying or practising medicine or engineering is now relatevely commonplace but this was not so in the early twentieth century.

The 1981 film Amy! by Peter Woolen and Laura Mulvey demonstrates this point. They use the life of an historical figure (Amy Johnston), to demonstrate a successful woman's place within popular culture. Amy! shows how a dominant culture safeguards its patriarchal values by permitting little entry to women.

"The more successful a woman is in the public sphere the more patriarchy must move to contain her needs through representations which reduce the threat of her achievement."(23)

Woolen and Mulvey contrast Amy!, a feminist critique, attempting to portray autonomy and independent roles for women, with a Hollywood film Christopher Strong, made in the 1950's. This film explores the life of another woman pioneer aviator, Amelia Earhart. Significantly, the film about Amelia

does not even allow the heroine's name to appear in the title. The film refers not to Amelia as a pioneer aviator and courageous individual, but to her adulterous relationship with Christopher Strong. He ultimately pressures her into giving up flying and Amelia throughout the narrative is made to see 'the error of her ways'. Firstly, she admits the total incompatability of flying and motherhood (the latter naturally taking precedence). Secondly, she admits by her death that suicide is a correct course of action for an adulterous woman to take.

While Christopher Strong presents ultimate disaster for a woman who is 'perverse' in causing ruptures within the dominant ideology, Amy! offers the heroine more than the romance/career choice. She realises that to make love the centre of her life simply will not work and she dares to be what she wanted to be all along."(24)

The film portrays Amy's achievement as a 'heroine' and then allows this achievement to be reduced to entertainment. It presents the songs which trivialise her by making her a 'cute' object.

"Amy's actual achievement becomes something which makes her lovable, its real value forgotten . . . "(25)

"The real threat which her achievements present has to be contained by the protective condescending stance of romance . . ."(26)

It would, of course be inconcievable that a parallel male achievement would be minimalised in this manner. Amy's

death/disappearance sets no standard of approved behaviour. She is not a sacrifice.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this paper I have dealt with issues surrounding heroines and exemplary female role models. I take these to be constructions of female character and psyche created by both men and women. In a sense these offer a celebratory view of women. However, successful women do present a sense of achievement for other women and children although it is difficult to stop reinforcement of patriarchal privilege in dealing with these prescriptions of female behaviour.

Feminist criticism whether Socialist or Radical within art, film or literature has attacked the 'sacred cows' particularly in regard to representations of female sexuality and notions of genius. Importantly, it stresses that representations of femininity are class and gender specific, not biologically 'given' or inherited. Also it stresses that feminine values have been repressed, ignored or marginalised because they differ from 'the norm'. This highlights the inability of women to be fitted into humanist traditions within the arts by attacking its more overtly mysognyist practices and texts. It also exposes the absent but invoked meanings which work more subtly to portray negative roles for women.

The problem of 'woman-as-sign' has made self-definition of women an issue for feminism. This largely replaces more liberal goals of equality with those of autonomy. The search for self-definition has invalidated the need for women whose achievements can serve as model forms of behaviour.

Current feminist debate centres upon the ways in which the lives and experiences of women should be conceptualised within our culture. It recognises the difficulties of representing or defining the experience of all women or even of specific classes. The need for heroines as 'celebraties of their sex' seems no longer necessary. However, using a heroine as a developed character, through which prescriptions of femininity are 'naturalised', is a useful way of uncovering more subtle forms of identification and representation.

FOOTNOTES:

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3. Wilson, E. and Weir, A. op. cit. p.5.

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6. Kaplan, Cora. op. cit., p.175.

7. Allen, J. Feminist Challenges, "Evidence and Silence", p. 174.

8. ibid. p.175.

9 . Allen, J. op. cit., p.178.

10. Carr, E. H. What is History, p.61.

11. Parker, R. Pollock, G. Old Mistresses - Art and Ideology, pp.48-49.

12. ibid.

13. ibid.

14. Allen, J. - op. cit. p.173.

15. Wilson, E. and Weir, A. Hidden Agendas, p.22.

16. ibid.

17. Connell, R.W. - Australian Women - New Feminist Perspectives, "Theorising Gender", p.342.

18. Kaplan, E. Ann. - op. cit. p.34.

19. Connell, R.W. op. cit., p.353.

20. Bussey, K. Australian Women - New Feminist Perspectives, "The First Socialisation", p.103.

21. Stewart, M. A New Mythos - The Novel of the Artist as Heroine, p.66.

22. Kaplan, C. op. cit., p.122.

23. Kaplan, E. Ann. op. cit., p.166.

24. ibid. p.167.

25. ibid.

26. ibid.

SECOND PAPER

INTRODUCTION

QUESTIONS - is romance a fiction?

- does it, in its more explicit forms represent soft pornographic fantasy for women?

THE DELEGATION OF SEXUAL AUTHORITY TO MEN

AN ANALYSIS OF THE DIFFERENT GENRES OF ROMANTIC FICTION

THE VALIDATION OF TRADITIONAL FEMALE ROLES

THE REPRESENTATION OF ACTIVE HEROINES

CONCLUSION

The primary concerns within this paper are the continuation of ideas relating to the representations of femininity as constructed around a developed female character - a heroine.

It develops some of the narrative structures and roles in which these characters operate within romantic fiction.

These representations explore notions of sexual difference and gender construction, particularly in relation to romantic fiction, as opposed to more classical narratives. I believe, however, that there is a large area of cross-over.

Previously I dealt with some forms of classic literature in which women and their femininity were the constructions of male imaginations using categories of opposition where women were described in terms of 'lack'. Here I wish to develop it in relation to popular romantic fiction written and read primarily by women themselves.

The interest here is in the messages that these gender constructions convey to their readers. It involves some examination of who the readership is and what, if anything, it means to read it, in particular, in its relationship to the nature of pleasure and sexual desire through romance. It is no longer, however, the central means for arousing concern over social patterns.

Romantic fiction has a long and established tradition within literature - particularly that written by women. Within

the classical 'high' literature tradition its narratives can be traced to the rise of the novel, encompassing such writers as Jane Austen and Charlotte Bronte. Romance, courtship and the relationship between manners and heterosexual love form the basis for these stories and for much current mass-market and popular fiction.

Rosalind Coward says that "there must be thousands of women who subscribe to the opinion that Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice has never been equalled as a romantic novel . . . exemplifies all the necessary elements of a good romance . . . popular Mills and Boon novels are not that dissimilar."(1)

Women have traditionally in our culture been assumed to have a special relationship with the novel, both as readers and as writers. Socially the novel was considered an inferior form of writing. Poetry, with its Greek and Latin sources was considered more the masculine domain.

The novel was essentially a bourgeois form which dealt with female conduct. Historically women writers constructed a vision of the class from which they came but within that, they spoke for themselves, as opposed to being spoken for. While they upheld the values of the class to which they belonged, particularly in regard to issues of conduct and appearance, they were also able to subvert certain patriarchal values and attitudes.

As well as being related to the rise of the novel, women are particularly linked to the genre of romantic fiction. It highlights the different role of romantic love and/or sex in the

lives of the sexes. This is probably the most interesting thing about romantic fiction, as it informs the issue of female sexual pleasure and its representation in heterosexual romance.

It also highlights shared fantasies about what women desire and find sexually attractive about men. The most common attributes which males in popular romantic fiction possess are power, dominance and social status. These are portrayed as synonymous with sexiness.

In our culture, sexuality is often regarded as a sort of domination. From a feminist position domination is overwhelmingly related to the portrayal of romantic love in popular romance. It is encouraged by rigid distinctions between men and women, particularly in relation to gender, characteristics of physical appearance and to displays of emotion.

Men and women have distinctly different ways of portraying the roles of romantic love and sex within their lives. This is particularly evident in literature. Men are not avid readers or writers of popular romantic fiction and over 50% of women read romantic novels of one sort or another, obsessively.

Is romance itself a fiction? Is it a female fantasy by which millions of women all over the world are duped and dominated? Does it merely 'put to rights' the impossibility of heterosexual relations, in a variety of improbable ways?

Does it in its more sexually explicit forms represent soft pornography for women, stressing the difference between men and women? Re-inforcing what Beatrice Faust says in Women Sex and Pornography:

". . .academic claims about female sexuality are that it is not self starting. Women are more turned on by haptic than visual stimuli and women who read romantic fiction may accurately represent female experience of arousal by touch."(2)

One of the most common reasons given for the popularity of romantic fiction is its escapist element. For example: - "Because it is an escape we can dream. And pretend it is our life." or "They always seem an escape and they usually turn out the way you wish life really was."(3) Escapism is not specifically a female pre-occupation, neither is fantasy. However, it is also true that women who read it escape into an improbable world where heterosexual relations are harmonised and idealised, and where women have a sense of power.

ANALYSIS OF THE DIFFERENT GENRES OF ROMANTIC FICTION

Romantic fiction is linked to mass market fantasy for women, but the books are not identical. It is important to differentiate between the various forms available, as each has its own readership.

This readership may also be mutually exclusive. Many women who are disdainful of Mills and Boon or Harlequin romances are avid readers of Daphne Du Maurier, Mary Stewart, Victoria Holt, Jean Plaidy and Anya Seyton. These are considered a better class of romantic fiction, combining elements of mystery, thriller, and well-researched historical detail. Books such as Rebecca by Daphne Du Maurier and Katherine by Anya Seyton are considered classics within the genre.

The types of mass-market fiction fall into the categories of 'Gothics', 'Bodice Rippers' and 'Soap-operas'. Together they have incredible market penetration and outstrip all other sales for fictional literature. They are quite inexpensive to buy. Interestingly, in their serialised form, they set a trend.

"Australian women who read a weekly magazine, and that means most of them, may be exposed to new concepts of sex through escapist fiction rather than through editorial discussion."(4)

The most disturbing thing about this is that in books where more explicit portrayals of sex are linked with violence

as in 'bodice rippers', a blurring of the areas of rape and seduction occurs.

Harlequins and Mills & Boon - 'Playing Mothers and Fathers'

These epitomise a rigid formula of romance, typical of mass-market fiction. The reader escapes to a world which is very similar to her own although it may be ". . . more orderly, more kindly and contain the guarantee of a happy ending."(5) "Mills and Boon readers are mainly women with fewer years of education and lacklustre jobs."(6)

The heroine usually finds material success through femininity and goodness. Exemplary feminine behaviour is more important than stunning beauty in these stories. The hero is charmed and they marry. The plots are thin and exist to justify the romantic incidents. Stereotypic sexual difference is all important. They have ". . . different needs and interests, certianly different experiences. They find one another utterly mystifying."(7)

Each separate story contains a romantic and moral dilemma for the heroine, and her experience is central to the plot. She constantly re-evaluates the male's moods and actions. The reader knows her thoughts. She is the subject. She may be engaged to one man but in love with another, or oblivious to love while recovering from a failed romance. Many stories return to portraying arrrogant, disdainful men who are humbled by the goodness of the heroine. Sometimes through sickness the hero is made helpless.

"The human frailty of Stephen Brandon's sickness even

though momentary - robbed Julia of the awesome fear with which she regarded him. One could not see a man prostrate and not feel sorry for him; and sympathy, however fleeting - left change in its wake."(8) Devotion, patience and sincerity become synonymous with femininity.

The heroine is licensed to seek romance and explore the problems of saying 'yes' or 'no'. However, all sexuality is reduced to the power of suggestion. Nothing is ever overt or explicit. Tensions arise from the inability of the sexes to communicate. She awaits his next move. The narratives portray the obstacles and misunderstandings which prevent the declaration of love. These stories with titles such as Promises, Crusading consultant and Winter's End give static portrayals of the way readers enjoy sexually benign fantasies. Finding men who will love them as they want to be loved. This appears to combine the male roles of father and lover as well as the female roles of mother and lover.

For the Mills and Boon reader there are certain criteria for good and bad romance. Readers in a questionnaire stipulated no violence, no rape, no detailed descriptions of sexual organs, no perversion and no promiscuity.

Harlequins:

Harlequins are a little more raunchy in content, encompassing more passionate notions or conquest, with titles such as Tempting Fate, Glorious Destiny, Rage of Passion, Enchanted Desire. These explore more overtly the battle between mind and body. The psychology of lust runs parallel to these stories as heroes and heroines are swept away by passion

and carnal desire.

Bodice - Rippers:

'Bodice-rippers' or 'Sweet Savagery' present more clear examples of this. Beatrice Faust says that this represents pornographic writing for women by fulfilling functions of titillation and escape. It is an escape into a colourful, violent and improbable past while still exploring the rituals of courtship. Although stories invariably take place in historical settings, extremely contemporary notions of female sexuality are represented. The heroines are sexually active, independent women who are often pioneers of unexplored and dangerous territories. They are free from sexual hang-ups and frequently use their bodies for bargaining power.

These books, with titles such as Love's Tender Fury, The Flame and the Flower, The Wolf and the Dove, and Savage Conquest, reflect from within the cliches of romantic fiction, an assimilation of some of the more significant changes in the representations of female sexuality. There is also a pornogrpahic slant which, once establishing female sexuality as strong, positive and guiltless, goes on to describe it within a set of conventional pornographic narrative devices. These titillate through patterns of dominance and submission. This may indicate why many 'bodice-rippers' use the slave/master, captor/captive scenario so often. Historical settings like the slave trade of the Deep South act to reinforce the action.

THE DELEGATION OF SEXUAL AUTHORITY TO THE MAN/HERO

This is a standard device and a recurring theme within romantic fiction. In terms of the stereotyping of masculine roles, this reverence for male sexual authority is significant in revealing that within romantic narrative structures, the nature of female subordination is not produced by fear but by pleasure - the pleasure if being desired. These stories reinforce patterns of dominance and submission such as slave/master, teacher/pupil, leader/led, ie. active/passive.

It constructs a masculinity which makes distinctions between male behaviour in the public and the private world. The hero's treatment of the heroine is all-important, as the experience of the heroine is central to the plot and this concentrates primarily upon her emotions. The hero's treatment of the heroine must comply with the idea of the gentleman within the man.

The qualities of desirability within the role of the hero are emotional detachment, age, power and control over other people's welfare. However, in its favour ". . . what other models are available for alternative popular constructions of masculinity. Romance is not being wilfully different in its descriptions of virility as constructed around positions of authority, heirarchy and aggression."(9)

"Socially and publicly-sanctioned male fantasies such as war films, violent thrillers, chaps-against-the-elements, endorse for the male psyche levels of competitiveness and

aggression, putting the male body through rituals containing ordeals of endurance, heroic endeavours and solitary survival."(10) These portray the invulnerability and invincibility of the male, celebrating power and dominant social attitudes.

The heroine's response is triggered by the hero's actions. For example:

"He leapt to his feet and stood over her. He gathered her to him, pressing his lips against her hair, her cheek, and last of all her lips. She surrendered herself gladly to his kiss and his arms tightened about her as though he would never let her go. . .

Presently he released her and putting his arm about her waist, led her to the sofa where they sat down side by side."(11)

This portrayal of sexual authority differs from one genre to another. Mills and Boon and Gothics have less of the 'bruised-lips' syndrome than 'bodice-rippers' but also more passive heroines. However, the characterisation of the hero's private emotion is important because it represents a 'feminisation' of the male role. Women, here construct very different representations of men from other socially dominant representations. As Beatrice Faust says:

"...romantic fiction treats the hero's emotions as tender, nurturant, thoroughly considerate and wildly attractive. In their public lives men carry on in the best swashbuckling manner. No effeminacy here! But in the bunkhouse, the boudoir or under the blue sky their sexuality is close to the female model. They are not merely goal-orientated. They understand the need for flattery and flirtation. Meeting soul to soul, as

well as skin to skin."(12)

This is significant as it may highlight a dissatisfaction with the way the reader perceives male sexual behaviour. Perhaps a 'sense of loss' in the private realm creates a need for a fantasy within the fairytale and assumes a confrontation between masculine and feminine values. It highlights an unrealistic expectation of the role of feminine sexuality as the heroine is powerful through transient qualities like beauty or manipulation through sex. It develops the misleading view that feminine values can alter, change or reform masculine values purely through 'love' or conciliation.

This may be utopian or challenging but it is also an over-simplification. In portraying a hero who is aggressive, ego-centered, often rude or brutal, the reader is asked to believe the heroine can reveal the gentleman within the man, hence giving the heroine special powers.

In the book Harem by Diane Carey, the relationship of the heroine Jessica Grey, eighteen, to the two male characters, demonstrates the fantasy of the special power of a beautiful woman. These characters, one her Turkish kidnapper Tarik, the other the Sultan of Turkey, to whose harem she is sold, indicate the possibilities for a young female beauty to radically alter the behaviour of rich, powerful and often cruel men. It reflects an over-valuation of the assets of youth and beauty. This is particularly evident in the behaviour of the sultan if we compare his treatment of Jessica to his treatment of other women within the harem. This is described as quite brutal and exploitative. Jessica, is however capable through her blond,

white, beauty and a "nakedness so specail, so alabaster, like a sculpture in marble"(13) to turn an evil and capricious sultan into a devoted little puppy craving attention and affection.

Similarly the kidnapper/revolutionary hero is willing to risk his life to free her from the sexual bondage to which he originally sold her. Passion and guilt blind him in a pledge to free her from slavery and to marry her himself. Love becomes the great leveller. It erases class and racial difference. Nothing is more important than the consummation of passion.

This reinforces what Rosalind Coward says is "the prevalent belief that people can (especially women) advance their social position through sexual alliance. Being a beautiful actress or model is seen as a route to power, powerful men will be attracted to powerful women. Women can make it on the basis of their beauty."(14)

THE VALIDATION OF TRADITIONAL FEMALE ROLES

Politically romantic fiction is an extremely conservative even anachronistic representation of female experience, values and roles within literature and society.

"The fictional world has largely been restricted to the sphere which is conventionally and ideologically assigned to women and for which they have a special responsibility, that of personal relations. There is a fundamental continuity which places them in a private, domestic world where emotions and personal relationships are at once the focus of moral value and the core of women's experience."(15)

Women have, therefore, been more closely identified with romance and love. Often these areas are marked-off and ceded to women. Traditionally, women have been asked to choose between reason and passion, pleasure and knowledge.

Romantic fiction, particularly that of the Mills and Boon variety reinforces these traditional definitions. It is easy to imagine the appeal of the characters and moral dilemmas to groups like 'Women Who Want To Be Women'. Within narratives that explore the rituals of courtship, the overwhelming inner purity and goodness of the heroine shines out and her capacity for support and care of others in confirmed and reinforced. "In the course of a Harlequin novel, most heroines demonstrate passionate motherliness, good cooking, patience in adversity, efficient planning and a good clothes sense, though these are skills and emotional capacities produced in emergencies, and

are not, as in real life part of an invisible glamourless work routine."(16)

Large numbers of readers of romantic fiction get pleasure and re-inforcement from simple stories where the woman is rewarded for her labour, her care and her virtue. The heroine helps to reinforce the role of teacher, helper or 'mother of mankind'.

Being ordinary and being attractive are equated in this type of novel:

"The middle class ideology of the proper sphere of womanhood which developed in post-industrialised England and America prescribed that a woman should be a 'Perfect Lady', 'An Angel in the House', contentedly submissive to men but strong in inner purity and religiosity, queen in her own realm of the home . . ."(17)

Despite the fact that the plots are generally very similar and the endings are foregone conclusions, romance readers enjoy discovering the ". . .value of romance again and again."(18) Even though they admit that the characters do not resemble people and occurrences in everyday life, romantic fiction readers also stress that they learn a lot about costume, historical customs and geography from the books that they read.

Romantic fiction is the most obvious, cheap and accessible form of literature (the characters are purposely secular and impersonal so as to achieve a wider readership) where a huge percentage (over 50%) of the population can

position itself and identify with the aspirations and life-style of the heroine (particularly in the less glamorously oriented stories of Mills and Boon).

Also, the achievement of her goals possibly co-incides with that of their own, except that it is acted out in more spectacular and more interesting ways which only add to the attraction.

"Thus although women are undoubtedly represented as sexual objects, there might be a sense in which women are offered a unique opportunity for reader power in the imaginary control of the uncontrollable. . . Romance offers us relations impossibly harmonised; it uses unequal heterosexuality as a dream of equality for women who feel the impossibility of being feminine enough. . ."(19)

It is also utopian in its imagining of a world of peace, security and ease. "It is all the more attractive in a world of peace, security and difficulty. Like women's magazines, romantic fiction does at least prioritise women and their lives, in a culture where they are usually absent or given second place."(20)

Hence, its escapist attraction. One reader in a survey said:

". . . romances hold my interest and do not leave me up in the air at the end or depressed like many modern day books tend to do. Romances just make me feel good reading them, as I identify with the heroine."(21)

However, the problem with the validation of this sphere of women's experience is that women are defined as being exclusively bound up with traditional feminine values.

This reinforces the balance of power in favour of the male. There is no hint in the fairytale ending that within the adoration of male power one person is depriving the other of autonomy. Rosalind Coward says that men have power only if women's is denied. None of the choices which are made everyday by modern women are recognised.

The fantasies of romantic fiction hark back to structures dealing with the heroine's suitability and willingness for marriage and the obstacles that prevent a recognition of love between the hero and heroine. While giving prioriy to one important stage in a woman's life they ignore and dismiss the importance of any other. As I have already said, I believe that this is their power. It is the power to harmonise heterosexual relationships. A fiction is after all by definition what which is ". . . known to be at variance with 'fact' but is conventionally accepted for some practical reason of convenience, conformity with traditional usage, decorum or the like.":(22)

THE REPRESENTATION OF SEXUALLY ACTIVE HEROINES

"Liberating the libido. Getting sex straight was an essential first step along the noisy road to liberation. Writing about it could be the next step forward. Books by women surveying sex and novels by women whose heroines savour sex are selling like hot dogs."(23)

Men in Western culture often see the responsibility for sexual pleasure to be that of the male. Predominantly they wish to continue that role. Women within romantic fiction appear to accept this and are content to have sexual pleasure bestowed upon them. This portrayal of sexual relationships is 'natural' and 'fixed' within shifting codes of manners. There is a particularly obvious change in 'the bodice-ripper', however.

The appearance of the 'bodice-ripper' as an extension of more conventional romantic fiction in the early 1970's and its immediate success is said to be the outcome of the so-called 'permissive revolution'.

Within the 'bodice-ripper' the dominant representation of female sexuality as passive is rejected, but pornographic, often violent acts of domination and submission are celebrated:

"One thing was certain: I no longer intended to be a victim, passive, acted upon. I was going to take matters in my own hands."(24)

The convention of 'guilt without sex' apparent in Mills and Boon is reversed within the 'bodice ripper'. No one suffers guilt

about sexuality. The heroine, Marietta in Love's Tender Fury is raped, seduced, loved, possessed and assaulted by the male characters, often by the hero. No character is introduced without some engagement in sexual activity.

'Bodice rippers' have a lot in common with other forms of pornography in ". . . simple narratives in which characters are no more than what they do, as soon as the story begins the reader has some idea of who is going to do what to whom and with what outcome . . . the acculturated reader knows exactly what sorts of things they are likely to get up to. Therefore, pornography's task is to provide every possible narrative opportunity to perform their sexual exploits. Once the scene is set pornography can get down to the real action . . ."(25)

No one suffers shame, guilt, pain, disgust or humiliation, one person is interchangeable with another. "It is the theatre of types, not individuals."(26)

"Bodice rippers' abound in standard pornographic conventions. These stories use scenes where the heroine is caught undressing or bathing. These provide a backdrop for the staging of a sexual encounter. Femininity is sexuality. The sexually aware and active heroine conforms to the conventional male pornographic fantasy of the 'come-on' where women invite and initiate sex.

In no sense can the portrayal of the heroine as sexually active rather than passive be intended to be progressive or autonomous. Neither can it be attributed to the ". . . widespread diffusion of feminist consciousness."(27)

In regard to pornographic conventions, 'bodice rippers' such as Love's Tender Fury unfold a story of sequences similar to that of Justine by the Marquis de Sade. The heroine in Love's Tender Fury appears to resemble both the virtuous, guillible Justine in the sense of being the object of repeated violations and betrayals upon her body and mind, and the libertine Juliette. The resemblance to Juliette becomes obvious as the heroine Marietta transcends the role of the victim and innocent. She finds sexuality without love can be both powerful and pleasurable in a violent world of survival of the fittest:

"This crude, muscular sailor showed me that love making couls be satisfying to a woman as well as to a man. I enjoyed it and I was greatful. . . Like a prostitute I had traded my beauty, my body for the comfort and protection he could give me. I wasn't proud of that but neither was I sorry. I was a woman alone. I had youth and intelligence and I knew full well that I was going to have to use them over and over again. They were the only weapons that I had and I fully recognised the power that they gave me . . ."(28)

As the story unfolds, Marietta endures one sexual encounter after another. It is a conventional pornographic fantasy of a sexual active woman giving and taking pleasure from her encounters. She represents both a sexual object and a sexual subject, but she falls short of being a true libertine like Juliette. Her quest is not an insatiable drive for sexual pleasure. This is incidental to her survival. It is far more within the acceptable confines of romantic fiction, for submission is inevitable of not unpleasant and often justifiable under the circumstances.

Descriptions of emotional responses and acts of will are all-important to the 'bodice ripper' as they are with any romantic fiction. While there may be some link with the libertine literature founded in nineteenth century French pot-boilers, 'bodice rippers' as a branch of pornographic writing are certainly not aiming at psychic dislocation or even parody.

Pornographic writing by males disallows the 'couple'. This is always central to the 'bodice ripper', re-aligning it with all romantic fiction. They return to socially sanctioned fantasies for women by using the cliches of 'meaningful sex' and love. Promiscuity is disdained and monogamy is celebrated. A happy union ends the story. Pornography for women in this type of writing is ". . . process-oriented, dealing with the developments of emotional concern between two individuals."(29) The heroine relinguishes any autonomy she may have found. Nothing has changed, but her capacity to enjoy sexuality.

CONCLUSION

Rosalind Coward makes a point in Female Desire that the fantasies of romantic fiction are infantile and in no sense challenge how society operates.

In dealing with romantic fiction there seems to be little point in attempting to analyse their unrealistic nature. Nothing about the everyday world is important. Certainly not the discrepancies between the facts of 'living' and fantasising about making it all more 'liveable'. The attraction is not a matter of fact versus fantasy. It does not matter to the reader how unrealistic it may appear. The fantasy of getting heterosexual relationships 'right' and making them ever-lasting is too powerful.

"Their one socially acceptable moment of transcendence is romance. This involves a constant return in imagination to the short moments in the female life cycle, courtship . . . They reinforce the prevailing cultural code: pleasure for women is men: and they make it easy."(30)

"They can satisfy unconscious desires without running into trouble with a very deep socially constructed sense of what is acceptable."(31)

The representations of masculine and feminine in these stories show that women are very much involved in keeping alive and attractive those qualitites which assure the status quo.

There are clear examples of great difference between the status and value of romance for women and men. Also there is a difference in the way women construct sexuality and power within romance.

In relation to pornopgraphic elements of romantic fiction Susan Sontag states that pornography like Sade's Justine, or the Story of O by Pauline Reage can be classed as literature rather than trash in the sense that they aim at distortion or psychic dislocation through excess. Popular mass-market fiction however, does not do this despite its links with pornography.

There is little that is progressive and less still that is subversive.

Just because women's active (rather than passive) sexuality is taken as a central concern does not make it progressive. For the only area from where " . . . knowledge or understanding is produced across sexual experience - love, marriage, sex, divorce."(32)

Psychoanalysis deems subversion to reside in fantasy but these stories are not fantasies in the sense of Mary Shelley's Frankenstein. They do not subvert the linear narratives of realism, illusionism or transparent representation.

Perhaps the only attack upon the 'symbolic order' in these representations which women construct for themselves is the 'feminisation' of the male role. The female dissatisfaction

being registered here is a desire to make men conform to a softer, less aggressive sensibility in personal relationships with women which male 'socially sanctioned fantasies' are busily dismissing.

There is a contradiction, for while keeping men very much is control in public areas, romantic fiction readers and writers treat romance as a most special and sensitive area - a female domain which has traditionally been undervalued and disrespected.

FOOTNOTES

1. Coward, R. Female Desire- Women's Sexuality Today, p.189

2. Faust, B. Women, Sex and Pornography, p.142

3. Radway, J.A. Feminist Literary Theory - A Reader, "Women Read the Romance - The Interaction of Text and Context, p.130.

4. Faust, B. op. cit., p.140.

5. ibid. p.145.

6. ibid.

7. Barr Snitow, A. Feminist Literary Theory - A Reader, "Mass Market Romance: Pornography for Women is Different", p.134.

8. Leigh, R. The Year of the Ram, p. 60.

9. Light, A. Feminist Literary Theory - A Reader, "Return to Manderley - Romance, Fiction, Female Sexuality and Class", p.134.

10. Coward, R. op. cit., p.202.

11. Chatwny-Ley, A. A Conformable Wife, pp.275-276.

12. Faust, B. op. cit., p.98.

13. Carey, D. Harem, p.98.

14. Coward, R. op. cit., p.171.

15. Lovell, T. The Politics of Theory - Feminist Literary Thought, "Writing Like A Woman: A Question of Politics", p.84.

16. Barr-Snitow, A. op. cit., p.136.

17. Showalter, E. Feminist Literary Theory - A Reader, "A Literature of Their Own", p.13.

18. Light, A. op. cit., p.141.

19. ibid. p.140.

20. ibid. p.143.

21. Radway, J.A. op. cit., p.130.

22. Onions, C.T. (ed.), The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1973.

23. Sunday Times (English), 1981 Colour Supplement, "Coward - Rosalind, Female Desire, Women's Sexuality Today", p.179.

24. Wilde, J. Love's Tender Fury, p.156.

25. Sontag, S. Styles of Radical Will - The Pornographic Imagination, p.67.

26. ibid. p.51.

27. Coward, R. Feminist Literary Theory - A Reader, "This Novel Changes Lives: Are Women's Novels, Feminist Novels?", p.156

28. Wilde, J. op. cit., p.78.

29. Radway, J.A. op. cit., p.128.

30. Barr-Snitow, A. op. cit., p.13.

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DOCUMENTATION

Contains - Introduction

- Source Material

- Series of Lithographs, 1 - 6

- Conclusion

- Bibliography

INTRODUCTION - an overview

Over the duration of the course I have produced a body of lithographic work which can be divided into six series. There is a large area of cross-over both in content and style among the different series. They inform one another on these levels. "The female faces", that is, series two, is, however, more separate from the other works. It is necessary to talk about each separate series individually in order to isolate clearly, the specific intentions and notions informing the prints.

The passage which describes the nature of power is intended as background information for my investigations into the constraints involved in notions of femininity and power. No single print is based upon this information but it remains a source of reference which moves between Feminist and Post-Structuralist notions of power and sexuality. It is important to be aware of both positions in order to remain flexible.

Although I would prefer more positive representations of femininity, over the course of the exploration I have presented both its positive and negative aspects. This appears to be valid for while the female figure in prints such as "Unwelcome Attentions" may be acted upon, she is intended to be both active and passive. This duality seems to me to be unavoidable.

"In a sense there is some acceptance that Australia is an overwhelmingly masculine society."(1)

Many themes which I explored in 1986, the first year of my M.F.A., were discarded as they represented a more passive femininity than I thought was desirable. The nature of my personal symbolism took the form of using objects like canons, lips, houses, water, weapons. These were intended to represent the polarities of masculine and feminine values. Examples of this may be seen in the photographs of the drawings. My rejection of these symbols was necessary in order to confront the issues of femininity and power in a more direct and specific manner. Also it was necessary in order to reflect my personal responses to certain dilemmas involved in being a woman.

I felt no need to seek out a particular historical figure and to develop incidents from her life in a symbolic manner. This was suggested to me as a way of tackling my subject. However, I did not want to transcend the personal responses which my figures were presenting.

The Nature of Power

"The usual model assumes that power is the power to make people do things that they would rather not do. Things that they regard as unpleasurable . . . . .

The connection here is with power and sexuality. Feminist thought sees power as the expression of male interest referring to a structure of male domination."(2)

Another prominent definition of power is based upon the theories of Michel Foucault:

" . . . for where there is power there is also resistance and this is 'inside' power rather than outside it . . . male gender relations are a process involving strategies and counter strategies of power. Sexuality is not biologically given but a social and cultural creation open to historical change. It refers not to intercourse but to identity, desire, status and relationships. As a set of relationships about who we really are, sexuality is a relatively modern phenomenum. We are controlled not through repression or denial of our sexuality but through our participation in increasingly elaborate discourses about what we should want and how we should be sexually.

Power preceeds not through denial of pleasures but precisely through their construction. . . . sexuality is organised around masculinity and femininity as positive and negative poles."(3)

SOURCE MATERIAL

This is very eclectic. The scenes in my prints are derived from events closely related to my journeys to and from the studio. They are not realistic landscapes or panoramas. Certain landmarks may become a symbolic backdrop for acting out the scenarios. For example, the Derwent river and the activities of the large and small boats on the waterway formed the basis for the imagery in "A Big Boy" and "A Clever Girl".

I do not keep diaries. The images presented in the included photographs are a series of preparatory sketches intended to inform the final print both formally and in terms of the subject matter. The prints often need to be reworked a number of times. A drawing on paper may not necessarily work in terms of tonalities produced on a stone or plate. I do use the printing process as a way of developing my imagery, for example, in the series of "Female Faces". These prints are very much tied up with the process and textual effects of stone lithography. They represent the most technically adventurous and 'painterly' prints which I have attempted. The nature of stone lithography allows scraping, biting, scratching, reworking and a greater range of surface textures. These processes, in a sense lend themselves to works which deal with the symbolic erasure and cancellation of the female voice. Also they deal with the struggle to find a voice and to meet and hold 'the gaze'.

CONCLUSION

In dealing with my proposal there has been some divergence from its original form. However, as a reference point it has continued to inform my work in a generalised sense throughout the two year period.

The proposal is not considered to be a prescription for the work and the work is not a description of the proposal, specifically. As I have stated previously, I believe that it is important to be aware of as many positions as possible at this stage as it promotes a more flexible approach within the work. I do not consider it possible to come to any definite conclusion above those alluded to by the prints themselves, in response to the exploration of feminimity, power and isolation involved in my work. They, however, continue to be part of an ongoing project in relation to my art practice.

FOOTNOTES

1. Grimshaw, P. Australian Women - New Feminist Perspectives. p.184.

2. Game, A. and Pringle, R. Australian Women - New Feminist Perspectives, p.282.

3. Kaplan, C. Sea Changes - Culture and Feminism, p.79.

4. Kaplan, E.A. Woman and Film - Both Sides of the Camera, "Is the Gaze Male?", p.31.

5. Wilson, E. and Weir, A. Hidden Agendas, p.188.

SERIES ONE:

"A BIG BOY" AND " A CLEVER GIRL"

These works, (both lithographs), comprise the only work in the exhibition from the first year of my M.F.A. 1986. They remain the most fully resolved works from that period.

The works explore notions of power through the juxtaposition of small and large. The titles are explicit about notions of sexual difference and sexual stereotypes.

The title "A Clever Girl" is intended to make a positive point - that although the female representation may be small or in a sense diminutive, the girl is clever because she uses her wits and agility, whilst "The Big Boy" with all his bulk and apparent size, is cumbersome and unweildy in his strength.

The titling for these prints became very important as it provided an introduction to the specific nature of the content and symbolism.

SERIES TWO:

"THE FEMALE FACES - SILENT PARTNERS"

This series deals with the issue of silence - silence as a power structure.

"Her silence and muted speech is both chosen and imposed upon her by the acceptance of her femininity. It has none of the freedom of choice of the taciturn male."(4)

The silence that is referred to in these works is social silence. The nature of that silence is constructed and contained by repression, not necessarily by oppression. This series also deals with issues of female vision. It is about looking out, staring and returning 'the gaze' as well as being the object of it.

"To begin with men do not simply look. Their gaze carries with it the power of action and of possession which is lacking in the female gaze. Women receive it and return the gaze but cannot act upon it."(5)

SERIES THREE:

"THE GIRL AND THE HOUSE"

"THE GIRL WITH A FUTURE"

These prints explore the nature of choice. Choices which face women from childhood in our society.

"The Girl With The House" explores the notion of a woman 'playing house'. A psychological game which is presented to women from a very early age as the only socially desirable alternative. In an attempt to alter this perspective, the house becomes a dolls house over which the female figure has the control. Again I use the right to manipulate, accept or reject the situation. Similarly with the two figures in the print "Girl With A Future", the future is 'the couple'.

SERIES FOUR

"UNWELCOME ATTENTIONS"

This series includes the prints "The Arcade - Saturday Night", lithograph, 1987; "Incident On The Way Home", lithograph, 1987; "Unwelcome Intentions", lithograph, 1987; and "Alleyway", lithograph, 1987.

This series comes from a desire to be more specific in my imagery. To isolate particular instances where a woman is vulnerable. Previously, in working through a more universal symbolism, the nature of my imagery was quite arbitrary. The content was more inaccessible. This merely confused the issue.

Within the "Unwelcome Attentions" series, I set up situations. These descriptive scenes use a heightened sense of the Tasmanian landscape and an awareness of local landmarks. They deal with a more specific sense of isolation and the loss of power within particular situations.

It involves a generalised threat of being alone. The threat is, however, engendered. The female figures do not represent heroines in the idealised male sense of 'the heroic'. They are not intended to be taken as a universal opression or as a threat to all women by all men. Most situations come from personal experience or general observation of a world very close to home.

SERIES FIVE

"THE MISFIT", "THE GIRL WITH BOOKS", "THE COUPLE"

These prints, all lithographs, involve an exploration of more monumental representations of masculinity.

"The Misfit":

The scene of a building site is taken directly from the ongoing project of the Sheraton International Hotel and the Marine Board building observation tower. Both of these dominated the skyline during the time that I worked on my M.F.A. Both monuments informed my interest in 'masculine' and phallic structures dotted around Hobart. Both represented an uncompromisingly masculine world.

The title "Misfit" refers to the inability of the female figure to enter that masculine world but also her decision to remain separate from it and quizzical about it.

"The Girl With The Books"

This print explores the notion of female exclusion from certain systems of academic knowledge. These are symbolised by the books. The stacking refers to monumentality - it becomes a tower of books. The instability of the tower is intentional.

"The Couple"

This print deals explicitly with male/female relationships. This relationship is purposedly ambiguous. In an attempt to present the female role as strong and decisive the

male figure takes on the more passive role. He ceases to be a monument and becomes a figure.

SERIES SIX

"SLOOP ROCK", "THE BLUE ANGEL", "THE EXISTENTIALIST", "THE PICNIC - AMUSING OURSELVES"

This series represents some divergence from my proposal. The prints are informed by broader notions of power, isolation and femininity than the other series.

Divergence from the proposal is important and has been unavoidable as reading and acquiring information facilitates changes of direction within the course.

All the figures exist in landscape but the landscapes are not intended to be symbolic.

"The Picnic - Amusing Ourselves"

This print is informed by notions of self-definition for women. It represents an attempt to take a more positive outlook. Ultimately I see power for women to be involved in the process of self-definition. Autonomy being equally important as equality. Also the print intends a presentation of shared enjoyment and pleasure as socially unacceptable for women, a taboo.

"The Existentialist"

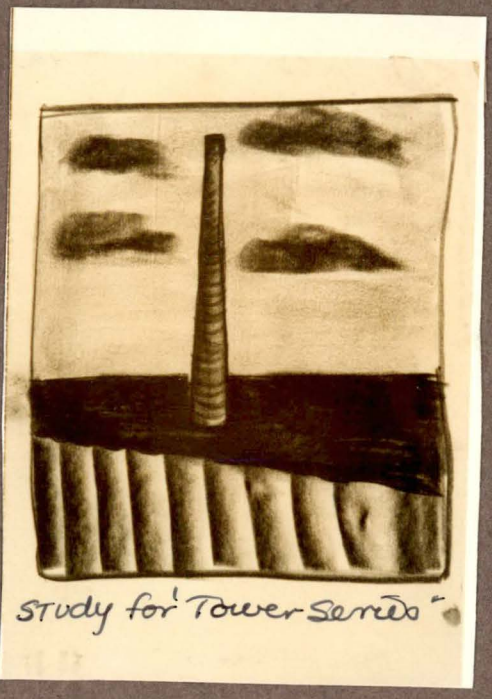
This relates directly to reading involved in my first paper on heroines, role models and exemplary women. It is informed by the notion of genius and creativity with the arts being gender specific. The relentlessly, striving male searching for creative transcendence. His actions, no matter how futile, remain heroic and positive.

" . . . that life ought to be purposeful, rational and coherent. This is a feeling that permeates . . . the post-war period. Renaissance man as the centre of the universe, was a repeated theme . . . Many writers after the Second World War posed the individual, creative man against the senseless void of the universe - 'man's cosmic loneliness . . .' a tragic humanism."(6)

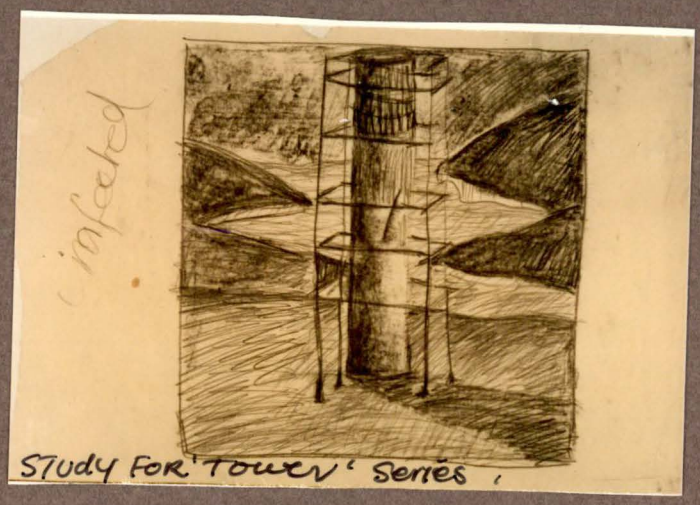
PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE DRAWINGS WHICH INFORM THE FINISHED PRINTS.

Study for 'Misfit'

STUDY for 'Misfit'



STUDY for 'Tower Series'

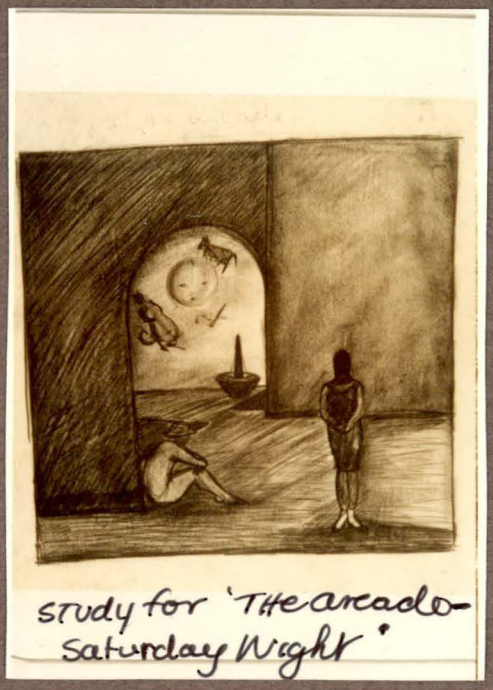


STUDY FOR 'TOWER' SERIES

PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE DRAWINGS WHICH INFORM THE FINISHED PRINTS.

STudy for 'Unwelcome attentions'

ALLEYWAY.



STudy for 'The arcade- Saturday Night'

PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE DRAWINGS WHICH INFORM THE FINISHED PRINTS.

METaphorical Landscape.

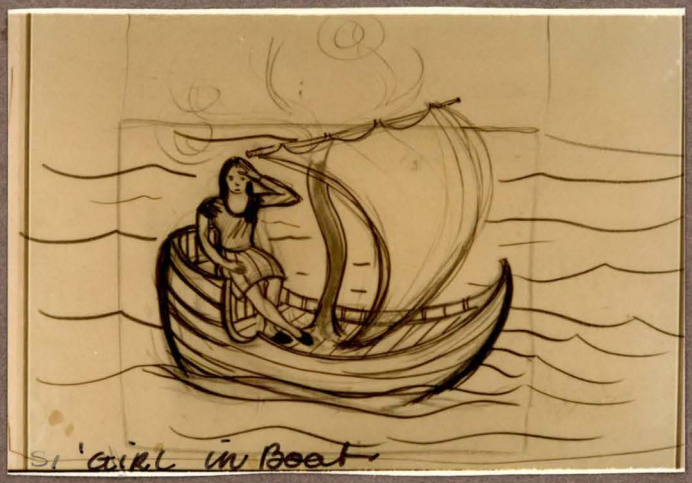
House and Whirlwind

'HOOSE AND Whirlwind.'

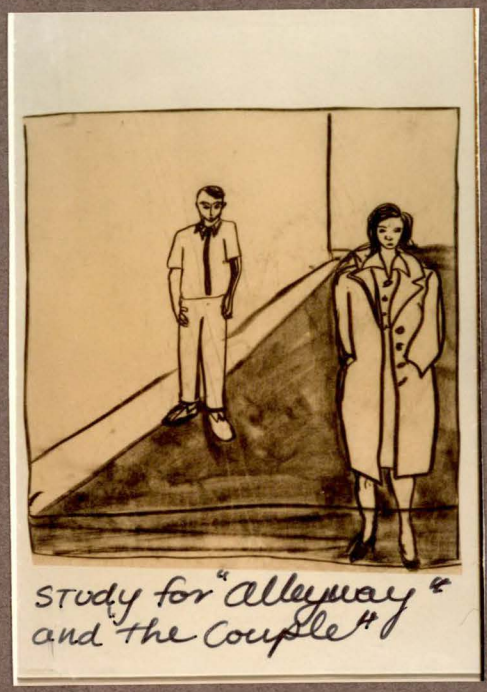
HOUSE AND Canon.

PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE DRAWINGS WHICH INFORM THE FINISHED PRINTS.

'THE MISFIT'



'GIRL IN BOAT'



STUDY FOR "ALLEYWAY" AND "THE COUPLE"

STUDY FOR "GIRL WITH BOOKS"

STUDY FOR "COUPLE"